(c) the number of licences issued during 1996-97 till date;

(d) whether the Government have received any complaints/suggestions about the working of these agencies;

(e) if so, the details thereof and action taken thereon;

(f) whether some unauthorised agents are also working in this field; and

(g) if so, the details thereof and action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) the number of authorised Custom House Agents in Delhi is 460.

(b) the licencing of Custom House Agents is governed by the provisions of Custom House Agents Licencing Regulations 1984. Issue of temporary licences is governed by Regulations 4 to 8 which, inter-alia, provide for the method of invitation of application, the details to be furnished in the application, the conditions to be fulfilled by the applicants, and the scrutiny of the application. The grant of regular licences is governed by Regulations 9 to 11 which, inter-alia, provide for passing of an examination by the person or employees of the firms who have been granted a temporary licence, for furnishing a security and execution of a bond by the prospective licensee etc.

(c) 31 temporary licences have been issued during 1996-97, till date.

(d) to (g) The Government have not received any complaints/suggestions about working of the Agents at Delhi Custom House. Nor has the Governement received any reports about any unauthorised Agents working at Delhi. As such, no action is required to be taken in this regard.

Reservation of Women in Parliament

1101. SHRI MRUTYUNJAYA NAYAK: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have started preparing a constitutional amendment bill to reserve one third of seats for women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies, and

(b) if so, the progress made so far in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) and (b) A proposal to reserve one-third of seats for women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies is under active consideration of the Government and a formal decision in the matter is expected to be taken shortly.

Seizure of Goods at I.G.I. Airport

1102. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the details of the foreign currency and smuggled goods seized by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence at the Indira Gandhi International Airport from 1st January to 30th June, 1996;

(b) the number and details of the persons arrested in this connection; and

(c) the action taken against those persons?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c). Directorate of Revenue Intelligence have detected four cases of attempt to smuggle goods at Indira Gandhi International Airport from 1.1.96 to 30.6.96 leading to seizure of assorted foreign currencies equivalent to Rs. 153.99 lakhs and foreign market gold weighing 15.251 Kgs valued at Rs. 80.17 lakhs. Four persons have been arrested in this regard. The names of persons and action taken against them are as follows :-

1. Shri Herbert Blazek detained under COFEPOSA.
2. Shri Abdul Quddose Rehman &
3. Shri Mohd. Aslam Khan - Arrested and remanded to judicial custody till 25.7.1996.
4. Shri Parmeet Singh Boparai - arrested and remanded to judicial custody, however, he has been released on interim bail on 7.6.1996. Presecution against him has been filed on 11.6.1996.

Export of Poor Quality Items

1103. SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received any complaint for exporting sub-standard goods to the foreign buyers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have decided to take action against all those exporters who are involved in exporting poor quality of their production; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (d). Yes, Sir. These complaints mainly relate to non-compliance of mutually agreed product specifications, defective packaging, delivery of wrong items, deterioration or contamination particularly in respect of edible/perishable items. The complaints are promptly investigated and appropriate action is taken against the

concerned exporters which includes suspension/ cancellation of his Importer-Exporter Code Number, his debarment from availing Import Licences, imposition of fiscal penalties etc.

Refinancing of Commercial Banks by NABARD

1104. SHRI VINAY KATIYAR : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have decided to withdraw the refinance support extended by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development to commercial banks; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b). National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has reported that they have not decided to withdraw refinance support to commercial banks. However, keeping in view their resources availability and comparatively comfortable resources position of commercial banks vis-a-vis Cooperative Banks/Land Development Banks, NABARD have decided to extend refinance support to commercial banks only for project-based lending in thrust areas which *inter-alia* include horticulture floriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries (other than brackish water aquaculture), seed processing, sericulture and other innovative and specifically approved schemes. NABARD would, however, continue to extend refinance support to commercial banks for loans under non-farm sector, SC/ST Action Plan and Externally Aided Projects.

NABARD has further reported that for Bihar, Orissa and North-East Region, they will continue to extend refinance support to commercial banks for all eligible purposes.

Highest Amount of Central Excise Paying Companies

1105. SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the names of those companies/individuals who have paid the highest amount of Central excise and income tax in Bombay and Gujarat especially Ahmedabad circle during the last three years;

(b) the total amount actually paid by them during the above period and total amount which was outstanding against them; and

(c) the total amount realised as excise and income tax in this region during the above period?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c). The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Jute Corporation of India

1106. SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to diversify the activities of Jute Corporation of India; and

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) and (b). No such concrete plan is under consideration.

[Translation]

Inflation Rate

1107. SHRI PAWAN DIWAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the rate of inflation has crossed double digit despite the measures taken by the Government to control it;

(b) if so, the weekly rate of wholesale price index and consumer price index of essential commodities during the last six months;

(c) the reasons for continuous increase in price indexes;

(d) the weekly rate of inflation on point to point basis during the said period;

(e) the effect of rise in inflation rate on the wholesale and retail prices of essential commodities; and

(f) the steps taken of proposed to be taken to check price hike and to control the rate of inflation?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) No, Sir. In the current financial year the inflation rate based on Wholesale Price Index has remained below 5 per cent. The inflation rate based on Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers CPI(IW) was, however, 9.3% as on May 1996.

(b) Unlike WPI, the Consumer Price Index is available on monthly basis. The movement of the two indices in respect of essential commodities for the past six months is listed below :

TABLE 1

Index of prices of essential commodities

	WPI (Base 1981-82=100)	CPI(IW) (Base 1982=100)
	1	2
December, 95	300.5	319
January, 96	296.6	314